(b) if so, whether any action plan has been initiated by Government to make customer services more transparent; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI S.R. BALA-SUBRAMONIYAN): (a) Yes Sir.

(b) and (c) My Ministry has been persuing the review of forms prescribed by various ministries/departments for their simplification or reduction, as may be necessary, by appropriate mechanisms. In this connection, a provision has been made in the Manual of Office Procedure vide para 154, to oblige ministries/ departments to carry out review of forms and procedures at short periodic intervals. Guidelines have also been issued recently requesting the ministries/ departments to redesign their forms, with a view to make administration more responsive and to ensure good customer service.

Setting up of Export-Oriented Refinery at Nagapattinam

1348. SHRI K.R. MALKANI: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Minister of State for Petroleum is pressing the Indian Oil Corporation to set up an export-oriented refinery at Nagapattinam, near his native village Thalikkottai in Thanjavur district of Tamil Nadu; and

(b) whether it is also a fact that the expert opinion is against the project?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM & NATURAL GAS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) and (b) Madras Refineries Limited (MRL) and Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOC) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding in January, 1995 to establish, an EOU refinery near Nagapatnam in Tamil Nadu, if found viable.

Fixation of Prices of Petroleum Products

1349. SHRI PARMESHWAR KUMAR AGARWALLA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there is a multiplicity of oil pool accounts, based on which the prices of petroleum products are fixed under the administered pricing mechanism;

(b) if so, what are the details thereof, their objectives and their respective role in fixation of prices of different petroleum products;

(c) to what extent there has been cost neutralisation or cost adjustments on account of each of these oil pool accounts in the fixation of prices and with what frequencies;

(d) whether there are any backlogs of adjustments in the prices on account of these oil pool accounts; and

(e) if so, since when and the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) to (e) The pool accounts are maintained to provide uniform and stable prices to the consumers within the country and reasonable retention margin for the oil companies. The adjustments are made under the following main heads:

— Crude Oil Price Equalisation Account
— Cost & Freight Adjustment Account
— Freight Surcharge Pool Account
— Product Price Adjustment Account

The oil pool account are supposed to be self-balancing. However, deficits have arisen in the pool account since 1989-90 because the sales realisation from the products did not fully cover the cost

incurred. The cumulative outstandings of the oil companies from the oil pool account which were Rs. 5701 crores as on 31.3.96 are estimated to rise to Rs. 15,500 crores by 31.3.97.

Payment of Royalty on Crude Oil to Local Level Groups in Nagaland

1350. DR. JAGANNATH MISHRA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have received any proposal from the Nagaland Government for payment of 25% royalty on crude oil for allocation to local level groups, including Panchayats;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the action taken thereon;

(c) whether the State Government has also given any guarantee for providing security for the oil installations and equipment, which was refused by it in 1994;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) if not, what steps Government have taken to explore the possibility of the Indian oil companies to resume their operations in that State?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise in view of (a) above.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Does not arise.

(e) Efforts are being made by the Union Government and ONGC to resume oil exploration and production operations in the State in consultation with the State Government.

Oil Selection Boards in Maharashtra and Punjab

1351. SHRI JAGIR SINGH DARD:
DR. SHRIKANT RAMCHANDRA JICHKAR:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Oil Selection Boards in Maharashtra and Punjab have been constituted;

(b) if so, the details of members of those Boards; and

(c) what steps are being taken to see that the Oil Selection Boards function properly?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM & NATURAL GAS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) In order to ensure credibility and transparency in the functioning of the OSBs, suitable instructions have been issued to OSBs from time to time. Also there is a system to monitor the functioning of the Boards by Government periodically. It may also be mentioned that the functioning of the OSBs is currently in abeyance.

Fall in International Prices of Oil

1352. SHRI YERRA NARAYANA-SWAMY: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the newsitem which appeared in the Economic Times dated the 16th February, 1997 under the caption "Significant fall in international oil rates", if so, the details thereof;

(b) how Government propose to pass on the benefits of falling oil prices to the consumers; and

(c) the steps proposed to be taken in this regard?